

Decolonization Learning Journey

A four-part Learning Journey with Mi'kmaw Elders and knowledge sharers.

Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia

Decolonization Learning Journey – Resource document

Webinar #3- June 16, 2020

Hosting team:

- Elder Jane Meader, Elder, BACS & MEd
- Mary Beth Doucette, Assistant Professor and Purdy Crawford Chair in CBU's Shannon School of Business
- Nicole Cammaert, Associate Executive Director, CSCNS

Guest speaker:

Stephen Augustine, Hereditary Chief on the Mi'kmaq Grand Council and Associate Vice President of Indigenous Affairs and Unama'ki College, Cape Breton University

Topic:

Contact and historical conflicts, treaties, and significance of Indigenous People's Day

Highlights

Youtube Video (shared at the beginning of the webinar)

Song by April Martell https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ro5pbe_okng

Reflection questions:

1. What is your personal connection to this topic – of Indigenization and Decolonization?
2. Do you see Decolonization as a set of practices - a set of additions, adding onto what you already do – or is it something more fundamentally disruptive that shifts everything that your doing at work and in your world?
3. How do you articulate what your doing to your colleagues?
4. How does individual level change relate to systemic change?
5. How am I personally enacting reconciliation at work and at home?

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Contact

Mi'kmaw oral histories describe early contact between L'nu and seafaring explorers, whalers, and fishermen. Europeans made contact as early as the fifth century, and by the late sixteenth century, many Europeans were traveling to the fishing grounds located off the eastern coast of North America. L'nu accepted the fisherman because they were focused on gathering food and the process of trade.

During early exploration, Europeans claimed the rights of sovereignty, property, and trade in the regions that they seemingly "discovered." In 1492, Christopher Columbus arrived in North America; after this time there was an influx of Europeans from England and France in search of resources. Contrary to the fishermen before them, European explorers were not solely in search of resources, but became increasingly interested in the territory and colonization.

Treaty of Utrecht

In 1713, after much conflict, Britain and France signed the Treaty of Utrecht¹, which ceded the rights of occupancy that the French had established in the colony to the British. The Treaty of Utrecht ended French expansion in the Americas, and the rise of British dominance, and led to increasingly complex political relationships within the colony. Several disputes over land ownership between the French and the British continued and Acadians refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the British Crown and wished to maintain a neutral position. The Mi'kmaq were a powerful force in the colony, and the British were wary of their relationships with the French and the Acadians. To secure their place in the colony, the British entered into treaties of peace and friendship² with the Mi'kmaq and expelled the Acadians in 1755.

In 1763, Britain had emerged victorious in its wars with France with the Royal Proclamation³ ⁴. In the Royal Proclamation, France once again surrendered all of its interests in North America, and Britain claimed ultimate dominion over its currently held territories and those conceded by the French. The Proclamation was also meant to stabilize relations with Indigenous nations and establish guidelines for European settlement in North America.

Mi'kmaw Chiefs and the representatives of the British Crown negotiated Treaties of Peace and Friendship between 1726 and 1789⁵. In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht ceded all rights France had to areas of land and soon after, in 1725, Eastern Indigenous nation and the British Crown

¹ Read further: <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-of-utrecht>

² View a copy of the Treaties of Peace and Friendship: <https://novascotia.ca/archives/mikmaq/archives.asp?ID=626>

³ Read further: https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/royal_proclamation_1763/

⁴ Listen to Trevor Bernard speak about the Royal Proclamation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXBSSZoikdA>

⁵ Listen to Stephen Augustine speak further about treaties: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gdv3yzfnjic>

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negotiated Treaties of Peace and Friendship⁶. With the encroaching settlement in the early 1700s, Indigenous nations representatives signed treaties with the British Crown to make sure that they would receive some government assistance in the future and to ensure that their people would survive and “live as usual.”

The Treaties of Peace and Friendship

The Treaties of Peace and Friendship did not reference land cession or release of Aboriginal title to the land. The British perceived the treaties signed in 1760 -1761 as thereby establishing control of the territory. The treaties signed in this period promise that the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) would retain hunting, fishing, and trading practices. Within these treaties, First Nation people did not give up the title and rights to their land, nor did they give up their status as sovereign nations.

The Indian Act

Established in 1876, the *Indian Act*^{7 8} is the principal federal statute for governing First Nations in Canada. The Act does not apply to Inuit or Métis people and communities. The *Indian Act* allows the federal government to administer status, governance, reserve land, and collective monies. The *Indian Act* banned crucial cultural ceremonies and challenged the very roots of Indigenous identity and social organization.



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⁶ Additional information about Mi'kmaw treaties: <https://mikmagrights.com/negotiations/treaties/>

⁷ Listen to Stephen Augustine speak further about the *Indian Act*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rhpl-YTio6A>

⁸ More information about the *Indian Act*: https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_indian_act/